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ABSTRACT

This handbook was created through participatory research between November 1989 and July 1990. It includes ideas, experiences, and stories contributed by learners, tutors, teachers, and organizers at St. Christopher House, a group home for people with disabilities in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The handbook contains five sections: (1) who are the learners?; (2) one-to-one partnerships; (3) the Morning group (the group home participants and tutors); (4) conclusions, including two models of learning, issues for literacy organizers, and goals for the future; and (5) three appendixes listing handbook participants, defining 21 items related to disability, and providing 25 resources. (KC)

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Learning about Literacy and Disability

St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program

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Researched and written by
Shelley Butler
October, 1990
Revised March, 1991

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Learning about Literacy and Disability

at St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program

A handbook developed with the
participation of
learners, tutors, teachers,
and organizers.

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* Cover photo: Aaron and Anne discuss a story.
* Photographs by David Kopman.

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Some of the participants discuss a first draft of this handbook.

About this Handbook

This handbook was created through a "participatory research" method. The research began November, 1989 and ended July, 1990. "Participatory research" requires a desire to be actively involved in the community and to learn from other people. It is a learning experience for all involved.

Many people have participated in making this handbook. **One-to-one** learners and tutors have spent a great deal of time talking to me about the way they work together, their goals, their achievements and their challenges. I have appreciated people's openness and their willingness to share the knowledge they have gained.

The Morning Group, a small group which meets three mornings a week at St. Christopher House, has also been very involved in this project. This group is a co-sponsorship with the Toronto Board of Education. The learners, teachers, and volunteers of The Morning Group have all helped document the experiences of the group. Besides participating in interviews, The Morning Group has shown me great trust, welcoming me as a volunteer with the group. It was enjoyable to meet with the group every week, to get to know everyone, and to learn in such an active way.

There are also people in the disability and literacy movements who have participated in this project. Their ideas and insights have been valuable to literacy organizers at St. Christopher House, who have used this research project as an opportunity to identify issues which concern them, as well as goals for the future.

My task has been to bring together everyone's ideas, experiences and stories. I am grateful to the Literacy Program staff who have given me valuable feedback and guidance in doing this.

A forum was held once a first draft of the handbook was ready. It was an opportunity for people who had been involved in the handbook to come together and to share ideas and feedback. Learners and tutors took the project seriously, putting a lot of effort and time into discussing ideas.

Before the actual forum, tutors and learners reviewed the handbook. They made sure that places where they were quoted or spoken about were accurate. For instance, Joan spent a session with her new tutor Sherry reading through parts of the handbook. Then they planned what feedback Joan would bring to the forum.

Interviews were seen as good practice for communicating and expressing ideas. Learners who use Blissymbols to communicate reread their interviews, using Blissymbols and writing, or just writing.

To prepare for the forum, learners once again reviewed their quotes, making sure that the right words had been used. Anne and Karen, The Morning Group teachers, also brought many of their own suggestions about the story of The Morning Group.

During the forum, people worked co-operatively, sharing ideas and feedback. Some people had corrections. For example, one learner said:

> I live in an apartment, not a group home. Can that be changed?

Other people had suggestions which affected the whole handbook. For example, Bill, a volunteer, asked :

> Why are we referring to tutors as working with "their" learners? Tutors don't own learners. Let's use the word "partners" instead.

Thank-you to everyone for your participation. This handbook is a tool for other tutors and literacy organizers to use. But I hope that the people involved in making this handbook will also enjoy it and recognize themselves in it. I hope that participants feel that this handbook represents St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program in an honest and intimate way. This is how we learn.

Shelley Butler

Table of Contents

Page

Section A: Who Are the Learners?.....1-3

Section B: One-to-One Partnerships

B-1: Training Tutors.....4-6
B-2: The Tutor-Learner Partnership.....7-9
B-3: Tutoring Methods.....10
B-4: Profiles of Tutors and Learners.....

Rosanna and Mavis.....11-13
Pat and Joan.....14-15
Terri and Joan.....15-18
Pat and Carol.....18-20
Jane and Don.....20-22

B-5: Challenges of Tutoring.....23-25

Section C: The Morning Group

C-1: Who Are the Learners?.....26
C-2: Development of The Morning Group.....27-28
C-3: Augmentative Communication.....29
C-4: The Basics of Blissymbolics.....30-31
C-5: Communicating with a Person using Blissymbols....32
C-6: Blissymbolics and Literacy.....33
C-7: Communication Experiences.....34
C-8: The Role of Technology.....35-36
C-9: Adapting Literacy Techniques.....37-41
C-10: Publishing Learners' Writing.....42-43
C-11: Gaining Power: The Wheel-Trans Meeting.....44

Section D: Conclusions

D-1: Comparing Two Models of Learning.....45
D-2: Issues for Literacy Organizers.....46-48
D-3: Goals for the Future.....49-50

Section E: Appendix

E-1: Handbook Participants.....51
E-2: Terms Related to Disability.....52-57
E-3: Resources.....58-61

Section A:

Who Are the Learners?

Part A-1: Who Are the Learners?

The learners who have a disability at St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program are a very **diverse** group of people. It would be a mistake to talk about "the disabled learners" as if they were all the same. Each person is unique in terms of their abilities, achievements, and life experiences. This is why there could never be a single formula for teaching literacy to people who have a disability.

One thing many of the learners do have in common is a negative past experience in school, or limited opportunity to go to school. One learner, Mavis, says:

> I didn't have much time because I had to survive, survive for myself and for my children. I didn't get much time or opportunity.

Originally from the Caribbean, it was only when Mavis came to Canada that she had the opportunity to begin literacy classes. When she came to Canada she was also fitted with a hearing aid for the first time.

Another learner, Joan, says she did not go to high school because it was "difficult for me to learn." She stayed home with her mother, helping with cooking and cleaning. Her family never thought she would be able to read or write, and now they are surprised by her progress. She has been coming to St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program for three years.

It is important to remember that some people become disabled later in life. These people may go through dramatic life changes because of their disability. One young man lost most of his language skills after suffering a massive stroke. Before this happened he worked in a laboratory.

One woman worked in a store until she became disabled and had to use a wheelchair. She had always worked and never had much opportunity to go to school. Now she hopes that literacy will lead her to new work, perhaps doing typing from her own home. Literacy is crucial for her because, given her disability, many jobs that she did in the past are now physically too difficult for her.

The negative effects of labels

Many people who have a disability have had limited opportunity to learn because they have been segregated in special classes. One woman describes a special class where:

> All I did was rug hooking and knitting. I didn't learn a lot. It was like a nightmare. I felt like saying, excuse me but can you please give me some homework. No, I was not challenged. Now I'm older and I need to do something about it.

One painful memory this woman has is of being labelled "mentally retarded." Now she says, "It's not a right word to say to me. It makes me feel sad." After such hurtful experiences, it is not surprising that when this woman first came to the Literacy Program she felt she could not learn.

The effects of labels are far-reaching. Sometimes a label can become life-defining, and a person is seen only in terms of their disability. For example, a person is seen as a "CP" (Cerebral Palsy) or as an "MR" (Mentally Retarded), rather than as an individual. The person is seen as different in a negative way, and is devalued. Society has had low expectations of labelled people, seeing them as inferior or incompetent. People who live with the stigma of labels often internalize these low expectations. The label becomes self-fulfilling.

Historically, people who are stigmatized have been denied human rights and equal opportunities. They have been rejected and segregated, or pitied. In protest, people who have been labelled often say, "Label jars not people," reminding us of how dehumanizing labels can be.

Treat me as a person, not as a problem

When learners come to St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program, they want to be treated as individuals, not as problems or charity cases. They want their basic right to learn to be respected.

The Program is a positive environment because it is personal and informal. There are no tests, no assessments, no core curriculums, no grade levels. People are given choices about how they will learn. For example, each learner has the choice of doing one-to-one tutoring or joining a small group. Learners are not streamed or labelled. This is a relief to many learners who too often have had assumptions made about them and their potential.

Literacy at St. Christopher House focuses on the learners' interests and needs. For one person, the goal may be to pass a citizenship test. For another, it may be to correspond with family members. Tutors and

learners take the time to decide what work they will do. Together they form a partnership which requires commitment and motivation from both sides. As one literacy organizer says, "People must be able to participate in their learning and want to be here."

Reasons for doing literacy

Like any learner, learners who have a disability have many different reasons for doing literacy. Many see literacy as a link to employment and greater independence.

Literacy also connects people to the world of print. One learner, Chester, says that he would "like to see all people read about handicaps." To realize this goal Chester is presently writing and publishing his life story. Because he does not communicate verbally, writing is an extremely important form of communication for him.

Literacy is also connected to creativity and personal growth. As Lois says:

> I want to learn to read because some people told me that you learn things in books. In the book about Christie Brown I learned that he and I were both disabled in one way.

Another learner, Anna, says she hopes to "write poems about somebody or for somebody."

Section B:

One-to-One Partnerships

Part B-1: Training Tutors

Most new volunteers at the Literacy Program have never tutored a person who has a disability. To do the job well, they need information about literacy and about disabilities. The tutor training program, which includes one evening and two full day sessions, gives the volunteers this background. Many different topics are covered, with one workshop focusing on literacy and disability.

Every tutor training session is unique, depending on the resources and creativity of the literacy staff and volunteers who are involved. Workshops are participatory, so that new volunteers can discuss and exchange ideas, ask questions, and try different activities such as rewriting an article in basic language, or planning a first meeting with a learner.

To introduce the subject of disability, a video produced by **People First**, a national organization of people labelled developmentally handicapped, is often shown. Called We Can Do it - The Story of People First, the video sensitizes tutors to the experiences of people who have been institutionalized or who have been placed in sheltered workshops, group homes and special education classes. We Can Do It has a powerful impact on volunteers. From it, they learn about social and political dimensions of disability, rather than medical information.

Attitudinal barriers

In training sessions it is important to talk about attitudinal barriers which people who have a disability face:

a. Being underestimated

At one training session, Jane, an articulate tutor who uses a wheelchair, described how a social worker tried to place her in a sheltered workshop. (In these segregated workshops work is menial and pay is below minimum wage.) This is an example of how people who have a disability are often underestimated and not seen as full citizens. Learners would not succeed if tutors underestimated them in this way.

b. Being ignored

Jane also spoke about her experience of being ignored in conversation. This is a problem which tutors must address and be aware of. Do we speak in front of learners as if they were not there? Do we really take the

time to include learners in decisions which affect them? These are critical issues, particularly for learners who do not communicate verbally. Don, a learner who does not communicate verbally, had a tutor who did not talk with him. This was very negative for him. It is interesting that Don carries a sign which says:

> I do not speak, but I do understand what you say. To help us communicate please watch me.

Don needs and wants to communicate. For him, a patient tutor is someone who takes the time to listen to him, and to talk with him.

c. Paternalistic attitudes

Paternalistic attitudes are often a problem. For example, Jane described how a stranger once stopped on the street and said to her, "Oh how nice. You're sitting in the sun." People often speak to her in a slow or sweet voice, expressing pity or perhaps trying to over-compensate for her disability. Paternalism is condescending and rarely helpful. Frustrated by paternalism, Jane reminds us that,

> A person in a wheelchair can be just as nice and understanding or just as rude and obnoxious as anyone else.

People who use wheelchairs also experience being patted on the head, and having their chairs pushed along when they have not asked for assistance. Similarly, people who have a visual impairment experience people taking their arm to guide them, rather than offering to guide them. It is risky to make assumptions about what kind of assistance a person needs.

To avoid paternalism, tutors must be aware of the way in which they interact with learners. Asking a person if they need assistance, and what kind of assistance they need, shows respect.

<u>Literacy as a transfer of power</u>

One staff person at the Literacy Program often talks about her work with a People First member who was Treasurer of his provincial organization. As Treasurer, he knew that he needed to improve his literacy and numeracy skills to be able to do the job well. Over many months, including some frustrating ones, these two people learned how to work together. In this learning partnership, the woman did not do the work for the People First member, but instead, helped him gain skills to be able to do his job with increasing independence. In this sense literacy work can be thought of as a transfer of power. Today this People First member is President of the provincial People First group.

Learners training volunteers

Learners often participate in tutor training sessions. By speaking about their experiences and about issues which concern them, learners play an important role in educating and training new tutors. However, learners should never be 'on display.' When they are invited to do a session, learners should play a real role, actively participating and interacting with others. For example, when non-verbal communication is discussed, it is useful to involve learners who do not communicate verbally. Workshop participants see how the learner communicates, and can ask the learner questions about communication and literacy issues. In this way, new tutors are immediately immersed in new ways of interacting and communicating. They are likely to feel more comfortable around people who do not communicate verbally. This is important in terms of building a sense of community within the literacy program. (For more information about non-verbal communication see Part C-3: Augmentative Communication and Part C-4: The Basics of Blissymbolics.)

Part B-2: The Tutor-Learner Partnership

Patience and respect

Learners are very clear about what qualities they hope a tutor will have. One learner, Judy, asks only that her tutor be "nice and patient." Another learner, Aaron, describes the difficulty of forming an equal partnership:

> A good tutor must have time and not get frustrated. A tutor should see me as a person not a vegetable. At Terraview School I was treated like a child. The teacher spoke to me like I was a child. I was twenty-eight.

Now, Aaron feels that patience, honesty, and acceptance are the most important qualities for a tutor to have.

Patience goes both ways. Besides being patient with their partners, tutors must also be patient with themselves. Jane, a tutor who works with a learner who does not communicate verbally, says:

> I get frustrated when I don't clue in right away or when I go off on a wrong tangent. I need to be kinder with myself.

It is interesting to note that it was the learner, Don, who gave Jane this wise advice about patience.

Different kinds of support and assistance

The learner is the best person to ask about what kind of support is needed. To make use of the Literacy Program, Aaron says:

> I need a volunteer to work with me. I need Wheel-Trans. I like to work with a tutor.

A person who uses a wheelchair may need assistance to open the bathroom door, or to push the wheelchair. Although St. Christopher House is wheelchair accessible, the front doors do not open automatically. This means that people who use a wheelchair must wait to have the door opened for them. This is a frustrating barrier for learners wanting to come and go independently. Also, the bathroom door at the literacy program is very heavy, as well as being too narrow to meet government standards and learners' needs.

Another accessibility problem is caused by a literacy computer which sits on a table which is not adjustable. One learner who regularly works on this computer has to sit sideways beside the table to reach the keyboard.

Tutors must be aware of these barriers, and be ready to assist in any way they can. Literacy organizers at St. Christopher House now make accessibility a priority in their fundraising. For example, funds have recently been raised to purchase an adjustable table for the literacy computer.

People who have little motor control may need assistance to turn the pages of a book, to take off their coat, or to eat or drink.

A person who does not communicate verbally may need assistance with communication. In this case the assistant may act as a facilitator or as a scribe. (See Part C-4: The Basics of Blissymbolics.)

Personal support

Personal support is an important aspect of many partnerships. One tutor, Gail, described her relationship with her partner Isaura as, "an intimate friendship between two women of the same age." Sometimes they would just talk together rather than work. Because Isaura became disabled later in life, the emotional impact of her disability was very strong. Trust was necessary before learning could begin. Both women saw themselves as building a real friendship, one based on equality.

Tutors cannot always meet all of a learner's personal needs. Sometimes learners ask for personal support which is beyond what most tutors expect to give. For example, one learner says:

> I would like a tutor again but not for homework. I would like a tutor for different things like to go out with me and help me to do things in the apartment.

It is important for tutors to recognize and be honest about their own limitations.

Becoming comfortable

Tutors are not always immediately comfortable in their roles. This is also the case with volunteers who work with The Morning Group. Elaine, a volunteer with the group, explains that when she first began, it took time to feel comfortable working with people who have a physical disability. She felt a strong need to be accepted by the group and to know that she was a capable tutor.

Bill, another volunteer with The Morning Group, told a new group of volunteers about his initial discomfort over working with learners who do not communicate verbally:

> At first I was very nervous. I wondered how I could listen to what learners wanted to do if I couldn't communicate with them. I assumed that communication was not possible.

Bill emphasized that these kinds of feelings are not unusual and should be recognized:

> It's alright to be nervous. You are in trouble if you are not honest about being nervous. If you are not open about problems you will fool yourself, and you are not being fair to the learner. Tutoring is not a teacher-student power relationship.

One tutor said that for a long time she felt that she had to be a teacher. Her partner loved to copy out pages and pages of words even though she did not understand them. This added to the tutor's guilt that she was not 'teaching' her partner anything. With time, however, the tutor began to see her role as a facilitator, rather than as a traditional teacher. She learned to accept the learner's work patterns and to try to build on them.

Achieving equality

For most partnerships, equality does not come naturally. It must be achieved. At first, some tutors feel that they are one-sidedly directing the learning. For example, one tutor continually asked her learner: "What do you want to do? It's your choice. You decide." The learner did not have much experience making decisions for herself, and found it hard to answer this question. It was a big breakthrough when the learner began to say what she wanted. Another tutor described how happy she was when one day her learner said, "I do not want to do that."

When there is mutual respect between the tutor and learner, it shows. In one case, a tutor had a very interesting way of telling her partner that she was pregnant. As she told her news she had her partner write it down. This is what the learner wrote:

I was happy to see Joan to night becayse I had news for her. I was going to tell her I am going to have a baby.

At first glance, this may not seem very significant. In fact, the two women were reversing roles. Usually the tutor would be a scribe and write down stories told by the learner. On this particular day, they did the opposite. It made the learner feel very proud.

Part B-3: Tutoring Methods

In the next part of this handbook you will find profiles of five partnerships. Look for these positive things when you read about these partnerships:

a. **Active involvement of the learner**

Is the learner actively involved in the partnership and in making decisions? Is the learner encouraged to be actively involved? Is authority shared?

b. **Meaningful work**

Is the work meaningful to the learner? Does it relate to the learner's needs and interests?

c. **Build on success**

Is the learning experience positive and built on success?

d. **Awareness**

Is the tutor aware of any limitation or impairment the learner may have? Does the tutor adapt teaching strategies to this?

e. **Focus on strengths**

Is the focus on the learner's strengths? Does the learner feel accepted and valued?

f. **Adult material**

Is the material used interesting and relevant to an adult?

By comparing the five profiles which follow, you will see how unique each partnership is. It is also important to notice that these tutors all use teaching methods that are commonly seen in adult literacy. Sometimes adaptations are made to better meet the needs of the learner.

Part B-4: Profiles of Tutors and Learners

Rosanna and Mavis

Originally from Jamaica, Mavis had never had much opportunity to go to school. She was too busy, she says, "surviving for myself and for my children." Now she wants her children and grandchildren to be able to come to Canada and go to school. When Mavis began literacy, an important goal for her was to become a Canadian citizen, which involves passing a citizenship test.

When Mavis came to Canada, she was fitted with a hearing aid. She began a literacy class with the Canadian Hearing Society. The people in the class communicated with American Sign Language, so even though Mavis did learn some signs and liked the people, the class did not meet her needs. The Canadian Hearing Society then referred Mavis to St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program.

At the Literacy Program, Mavis' first match was brief since she and her tutor found it difficult to work together. Next, Mavis was matched with Rosanna, and they have been working together for nearly two years.

Communication

Although Mavis is hard of hearing, Rosanna speaks to her in her usual soft voice. When Rosanna speaks to Mavis she always looks directly at her, speaking clearly and slowly, and explaining things in concrete terms. For Mavis, it is very important that the work environment be quiet. Her hearing aid is useful, but it does amplify and distort background noise.

Variety of work

Rosanna and Mavis do a wide variety of work such as:

- hydro bills
- a letter to Ontario Hydro
- banking
- letters home
- basic adult books
- worksheets (maps, diagrams etc.)

Mavis brings in much of this work herself. Rosanna finds that visual work, such as using maps and diagrams, works well for Mavis. Sometimes they do role-playing to demonstrate the meaning of a word. Mavis and Rosanna work very spontaneously together. One technique which allows them to do this is the **Language Experience Approach**, which is described below.

The Language Experience Approach

The Language Experience Approach is an important teaching method in adult literacy. This approach is based on the idea that an adult learns best when the learning material is meaningful to her and written in a style with which she is familiar. The Language Experience Approach can be broken down into these steps:

a. The learner talks about a personal experience. (Rosanna and Mavis often talk about Mavis' work, about Jamaica, or about recipes.)

b. The tutor writes down (transcribes) what the learner says.

c. The tutor reads back exactly what has been said, either alone, or with the learner.

Tutors and learners can then use their text to work on reading and writing in many different ways. Here are a few examples:

- Copy words from the story onto flashcards.
- Match the words on the flashcards to the words in the story.
- Practise recognizing words in the story.
- Practise reading the story.
- Arrange the flashcards in the order of the original story.
- Make new sentences with the flashcards.
- Type the story onto the computer.
- Edit and revise the text and prepare it for publication.

Where we recognize success

Tutors should not feel that they have to do all of these exercises. As one tutor points out:

> We have to think about where we recognize success. When I did Language Experience stories with my partner it really was a success for us just to get a couple of lines down on paper.

The citizenship test

Rosanna and Mavis decided to prepare for the citizenship test. First, they found out together about the test and gathered up the materials which they needed to study.

Rosanna was unsure about how to help Mavis prepare for the test. Many of the words which Mavis had to learn, such as the names of provinces and Premiers, were new to her. Some of the words, like "Saskatchewan," had sounds which Mavis had never heard before.

Mavis had an idea for how she could practise hearing and saying the words. She asked Rosanna to make tapes of the material. Mavis then studied by listening to the tapes on her Sony Walkman. Rosanna was surprised that Mavis would choose a method of learning which involved listening. (After all, hearing was supposed to be Mavis' impairment.) The tapes were very successful and eventually Rosanna made practice tapes of a citizenship hearing.

One good thing leads to another

Mavis passed her citizenship test and she wanted to share her good news. She and Rosanna decided to write an announcement for Literacy Link, the monthly Literacy Program newsletter. They used the Language Experience Approach to write this piece:

Mavis Gets Her Citizenship

January 3rd I went for my interview.
The Judge asked me a few questions.
He was a very nice man. He asked five
questions and checked them all off correct.
He said "you pass your citizenship."
I glad I get my citizenship!
I am so happy of life.
Thank you Anne (from The Morning Group),
my social worker, and Rosanna for all your help.

Mavis was proud to see her story published. One final note: Learning goes two ways. Rosanna learned all about the political structure of Jamaica.

Pat and Joan

Joan lived in Jamaica until she was 34 years old, and never went to high school because, she says, "it was difficult for me to learn." Her mother tried to teach her at home but Joan feels that she learns more with a tutor. "A tutor is more patient."

At one time in her life Joan was labelled developmentally handicapped. Now she lives in an apartment with three other women, two of whom also do literacy at St. Christopher House.

The social services

When Pat first began working with Joan, she met with Joan's social worker who was helpful in sharing ideas about how literacy could help Joan in her daily life. Pat found, however, that she and the social worker had different approaches. For the social worker, Joan was a client whom she wanted to help lead a challenging, interesting life. Pat, however, hoped that Joan would be a friend and that they would both learn from each other. Pat wanted to include Joan as an equal in the meeting with the social worker. Instead, Joan attended the meeting but heard herself referred to as "the client."

Literacy for shopping

Pat learned that shopping for the apartment was very important to Joan. Knowing this, Pat created literacy and numeracy activities which focused on this goal, such as:

- a personal dictionary using pictures of food and words
- flashcards with pictures and words to practise word recognition and matching words
- cutting out food advertisements from newspaper flyers and learning how to compare prices
- using a calculator to work on counting money and change

This work was very practical for Joan. She gained an awareness of how to use the newspaper, look for good buys, and choose foods to buy. This is significant since shopping is one of the few areas in her life that Joan has control over.

Literacy for work

The partnership reached a turning point when Joan moved from her work at the sheltered workshop to start a job at Ontario Hydro sorting

mail. At this point Joan's literacy needs increased dramatically. She wanted to learn how to write. And she wanted to be more confident with the concept of alphabetical order, so that she could do her job well.

Joan wrote about her need in this Language Experience story:

I will have to learn to read more.

It is very important to me and my job.

I really want to do it

An important project for Joan was learning how to address an envelope. This helped Joan with her work in the mailroom, and was useful since she wanted to be able to write letters to her family.

Terri and Joan

Following her work with Pat, Joan was matched with Terri, a new tutor.

Lifewriting

Terri capitalized on Joan's interest in talking about her childhood in Jamaica and about her family. They used the Language Experience Approach to write about these subjects. Joan published the stories in Literacy Link, something she really enjoyed. She published "A Child Growing Up In Jamaica" about her childhood memories of Cave Valley Market. She also published "Birthday Title", a story about celebrating her birthday with her family:

Birthday Title

My brother celebrated my birthday with the family. He had a barbecue at his home. We also had a birthday cake. I was sitting beside my sister and I caught my brother in the kitchen putting the candles on the cake. I was excited. Very excited. I was clearing off the side of the table and I looked and saw my presents coming. My sister-in-law took the box and hit me on my head. I stayed with them for the weekend and I helped them. It was good to be with them.

Besides writing and publishing stories, Terri and Joan worked on the alphabet, alphabetical order and reading.

Alphabetical order

To help Joan learn the alphabet and alphabetical order, Terri printed the alphabet in both capital and small letters on a long piece of cardboard. When Joan was learning alphabetical order she would use the alphabet card as a reference, matching the beginning letter of a word with a letter on the card. The alphabet was divided into thirds, and Terri taught Joan to think about whether a word began with a letter from the first, middle, or last part of the alphabet. In this way, Joan was also learning problem-solving skills and strategies.

Reading together

Terri and Joan would often read together, with Terri quietly helping Joan when she was stuck. There was never an atmosphere of judgement. They would often read Joan's Language Experience stories so reading became integrated with talking, writing and listening. Terri feels that it would also have been useful to read to Joan, and to tape material for her. When Terri and Joan read together, Terri introduced Joan to different strategies for reading. These are described below.

Reading strategies

a. Guessing

Terri continually encouraged Joan to guess at words when she was reading. She would say, "What do you think it is? Just try guessing it. We all guess when we read." With confidence, learners can become very good at predicting or guessing what a word is. The strategy is not to guess randomly at a word, but to predict the word from context cues. Reading for meaning is stressed.

b. Sight Recognition Words

Sight words are words which the learner knows automatically. Beginning adult readers often have several words that they know by sight, such as their name and address, or words which are seen in public places such as "exit" or "subway." Words which are important to the learner can be written onto flashcards, practised and memorized. Tutors can build on a learner's sight words, using them to introduce new words.

Recognizing words on sight relies mostly on visual memory, not on 'decoding.' Joan can recognize many common small words on sight. This increases her fluency when she reads.

c. Phonics

Phonics relies on decoding words by sounding out and blending together the sounds of the letters of the word. A personal dictionary reinforces an understanding of phonics because words are organized into the order of the alphabet. A learner can, for example, read the "b" words to practise recognizing the sound of the letter "b". While a phonic approach may be useful to a learner who already has a base in phonics, it is also very complex. The reader constantly finds rules, and exceptions to rules. Another drawback to phonics is that it does not emphasize reading for meaning.

d. Structural analysis (word patterns)

Structural analysis of words focuses on decoding parts of words. For example, the word "grandmother" can be broken down into "grand" and "mother." Another example of structural analysis is to focus on word endings such as "ed" and "ing." Terri tried to make decoding words more concrete for Joan by building on Joan's strong understanding of math. For example: work + ing = working.

Joan could often recognize a small word in a larger one, such as the word "an" in the word "another." But recognizing a small word in this way does not necessarily help the learner to read the word.

Terri worked with Joan on recognizing word patterns such as "hat, mat and flat." But this concept was very abstract for Joan and she would not always see two words like "hat" and "flat" as different.

<u>Clear explanations</u>

Terri stresses the importance of explaining things clearly to Joan. Many typical workbook exercises such as "fill in the blank" are too abstract for Joan. When activities are not clearly explained, things can go wrong. Here is an example:

Homework

add <u>ed</u> to the end of the word

help → helped
stay → helped
walk → helped
work → helped

In this case, Joan was working on recognizing "ed" endings in words. However, Joan did not understand that she was supposed to add "ed" to each word, as was done with the model. Instead of adding "ed" to each word, Joan wrote "helped" beside each word.

Avoiding failure

By continually talking together about their work, and by breaking down tasks into small steps, Terri and Joan avoided problems. When something was misunderstood, Terri would leave it and move on to something new. In this way they avoided failure. Terri is always enthusiastic and encouraging towards Joan.

Pat and Carol

At the same time that Pat tutored Joan, she also tutored Joan's roommate Carol. Learning is more challenging for Carol than for Joan. Given this, Pat made a strong effort to understand Carol's knowledge of the world, and her life experiences. They would talk about things that they had in common such as family, birthdays, holidays and commuting. Pat appreciated Carol's eagerness to learn and saw it as a great strength.

Routine and variety

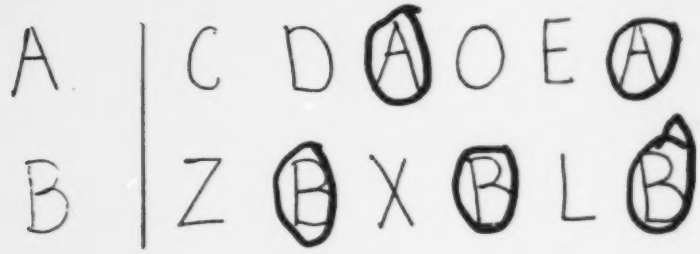
In working with Carol, both routine and variety were extremely important. Routine and repetition helped to reinforce learning. Variety was important for keeping Carol's attention and making the work interesting and fun.

Together, Pat and Carol established certain routines. For example, at every meeting, Carol would point out the date on the calendar to Pat. Pat made Carol feel that this was a useful thing to do, not a test or a meaningless task.

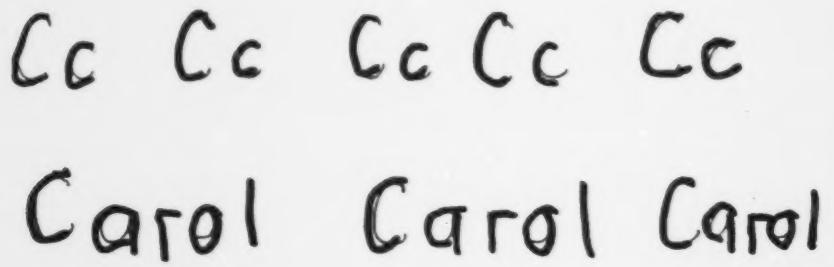
Letter recognition

Much of Carol's work focused on learning to recognize letters. A regular activity for Carol was searching for particular letters in magazines. Pat taught Carol how to use scissors so she could make her own personal dictionary. The dictionary has food words since, like Joan, Carol enjoys shopping. Carol also practised recognizing letters using scrabble letters.

Another way to reinforce letter recognition is matching letters. In the exercise below for example, Carol circled matching letters:



Carol did practise some writing herself, however, it was difficult for her to hold the pen. Below is an example of Carol's work:



Pat wanted Carol to feel physically comfortable so they did not spend too much time on writing. They focused more on recognizing letters and words, and discussing ideas.

Writing for a purpose

Carol loved to send cards, so she and Pat made many cards for birthdays, Christmas, Valentine's Day and other holidays. Making and sending cards showed Carol that writing has a purpose. (When you write a card you have an audience.) One way to develop this work even further would be for the tutor to send cards to Carol. Carol could be encouraged to bring the cards in for the tutoring sessions to read them with her tutor.

Knowing when to leave a project

Pat tried using play money to teach Carol how to use money. This would have been useful to Carol since she is responsible for some of her own money. This project, however, did not catch on so Pat and Carol decided to leave it. Knowing when to leave a project, rather than let it become frustrating, is important. If this goal had been very important to Carol, they might have pursued it using real money. In retrospect, Pat feels that it would have been beneficial to use real money from the beginning. It is not necessary to master play money before learning real money.

Public issues

One evening at St. Christopher House the organization **Pollution Probe** gave a talk to a writing group called Writers' Ink. Pat, Carol and Joan were invited to join the presentation. They listened to the talk and then wrote the following Language Experience story:

> Tonight we talked about pollution. Our water is full
> of chemicals. It is bad for us. It comes from Lake Ontario.
> They empty garbage into it.

The Pollution Probe presentation had a strong impact. Both Carol and Joan talked about it for many weeks afterwards. They gained information about pollution and were able to put the information into their own words. This work connected them to a current public issue.

Personal support

Pat gave Carol both personal support and practical advice. For example, once, after seeing Carol being stopped on the street at night, Pat explained to her that we do not have to talk with strangers. Pat found that through literacy Carol became much more articulate, and more able to stand up for herself.

The freedom and fun in this partnership was a new thing for Carol. She was, for example, used to losing her break if she was late for work at the sheltered workshop. Pat introduced a different kind of relationship to her.

Jane and Don

When Jane and Don work together, Don enjoys telling stories about his childhood in Prince Edward Island. Don communicates using **Augumentative Communication**, including **Blissymbolics**. Blissymbolics is a language made up of graphic visual symbols with the meanings written below them. To communicate, Don points to the different symbols. (See Part C-3: Augmentative Communication and Part C-4: The Basics of Blissymbolics.)

Often Jane transcribes the stories in Don's words, using the Language Experience Approach. Recently, Jane and Don have also done a variation of the Language Experience Approach. Jane has elaborated upon Don's words, attempting to capture the emotion and richness of his stories. Jane and Don have become co-authors of Don's stories.

Before looking at their writing, it is helpful to understand the process which Jane and Don go through to articulate a story. Don does not speak and he is developing skills in both Blissymbolics and literacy. However,

as you will see below, facial expressions, imaginative miming, and answering yes/no questions are all important methods of communication for Don. Jane and Don discussed the following story for about 45 minutes. Jane describes the process as very rewarding, and clearly her interest and empathy enable Don to tell such an intricate story.

Articulating the story

Don began by showing Jane a picture of a horse in a visual dictionary. Knowing a little about Don's childhood, Jane asked if he wanted to talk about a horse in Prince Edward Island. Don responded "yes." Next, Jane asked Don if this was a horse from his childhood. Don indicated that he was about ten. Knowing that Don lived on a farm, Jane asked if it was a family horse. Don responded by spelling out "new," so it was a new family horse.

Next, Don pointed to the symbol for "walk" and to the symbol for "similar." Jane guessed that Don meant "running." Jane then asked if it was a race horse, and by Don's expression she knew that she was wrong. She guessed that it was a wild horse, and Don indicated that this was close. Then she realized that Don was telling her about a runaway horse. Jane then asked a series of questions about where Don was in relation to the horse (riding it? near it? behind it? in a wagon?). Jane and Don established that he was in a wagon with his sister Bonnie who was about five at the time. They continued:

> Was there an adult?
> Yes. Father.
> Was your father in the wagon?
> No.
> So you were sitting with your sister in the wagon when suddenly the horse started to move?

At this point Don laughed because Jane understood the story. He took a pen which he uses as a pointer and is tied onto his wheelchair, and dropped it over the side of his chair. Jane quickly understood that Don was illustrating how he had fallen off the wagon but was still holding on to the reins. How did the horse ever stop? Don mimed eating, and Jane understood that the horse eventually stopped to eat.

Writing the story

Once Don had articulated his story, Jane attempted to write the story from his point of view, as if she were hearing him tell it. Here is an excerpt:

The Runaway Horse

One summer's day when I was about ten years old I was riding in a wagon behind our family horse with my sister Bonnie who was then five. I frequently rode in the wagon when my father went to bring the cows in from the pasture at milking time, but we had recently acquired a new horse and I was unprepared for this horse's reluctance to wait for anyone. Before my father could hop up on the wagonseat beside us, and before anyone realized what was happening, the horse suddenly bolted.

I had hold of the reins, but I was powerless to pull on them with the amount of force necessary to stop the horse. Bonnie screamed and I was terrified, but there was little I could do. My father came running after us, shouting at the horse, but he could not outrun a runaway horse. As we sped along I wondered how far a horse could run before it tired and had to stop. I wondered if I would ever see my father or my mother or anyone else again.

When Jane had written the story, she and Don spent a session clarifying details until Don felt satisfied with the results. Don was very happy to hear his story read to him. He had never had the opportunity to hear his experiences expressed in such a full and developed way.

This variation of the Language Experience Approach challenges traditional ideas about literacy. Most literacy work focuses on encouraging the learner to express their stories in their own words. Yet here is a learner's story which is clearly not in the learner's words. In fact, Don cannot even read the story himself. In this case, the Language Experience Approach has evolved into co-authorship. **It is important to note that Don has also written "The Runaway Horse" in his own words.** This story recently appeared in Literacy Link:

Runaway Horse

This happened when I was ten on the farm
'n Prince Edward Island.
My sister Bonnie was with me.
My father was behind the wagon.
We were going in the wagon to get our
four cows.
Suddenly the horse ran away before father
got into the wagon.
I was scared.
I began to fall.
Suddenly the horse stopped to eat.
It was lucky the horse was hungry.

In this way Don has two versions of the same story. Each has been produced using a different process, and each serves different needs.

Part B-5 : Challenges of Tutoring

Tutoring is challenging. Here are eight things which challenge partnerships.

a. Progress

A tutor may feel that their partner is not making progress. One tutor, for example, felt that her partner "didn't learn anything." Unfortunately this tutor blamed herself for this situation and felt that she was a bad tutor. Tutors are bound to have doubts, and it is important that tutors can find support from other tutors and staff. As one tutor says, "Sometimes it takes another person to help give you perspective on your work."

Many tutors find that they begin to look at progress in new ways, no longer seeing it as something that can always be measured. For example, many tutors find that their partners gain self-confidence and become better at communicating. This is progress! One tutor feels that the most important issue is whether or not the learner feels satisfied with his progress. Progress can also be very subtle, such as when a learner begins to carry a pen because h feels that he may need to write something down.

b. Self-esteem

Low self-esteem can be a major block for a learner. One learner used to always say, "I can't do that," and "I'm not smart," and "I wouldn't be able to do that." This learner only felt comfortable copying and tracing. It took time, encouragement, and gentle pushing to get her to do the more challenging work of which she was always capable.

c. Lack of goals

In a learner-centered approach the tutor is supposed to follow the learner's goals, but this is difficult if the learner has not articulated any goals. Many tutors have confronted this problem, especially when working with someone who has been very sheltered. Tutors in these situations work hard to build a relationship with the learner, and to offer as many choices as possible about what work they do.

d. Memory

Some tutors find that it is hard for their learner to retain information or concepts. A combination of creativity and repetition, and working with material which is directly relevant to the learner's life, helps to overcome this challenge. When literacy work is relevant to the learner, there is more

chance that they will practise it in their daily life, such as when they read signs or maps. Respecting when a learner is simply tired is also important.

e. Transportation

Learners who are mobility impaired usually use **Wheel-Trans** to get to St. Christopher House. This is the transportation service for people who cannot access the subways, buses, and streetcars in Toronto. Unfortunately, rides are often early or late, something which the learner has no control over. The first eight weeks when rides cannot be pre-booked or guaranteed is the most difficult time. Each of these rides must be booked four days in advance and is only confirmed the night before. In one partnership where both the learner and tutor used Wheel-Trans, they missed three meetings in a row because one or the other did not get a ride.

f. Health problems

Some tutors feel uneasy about having a relationship with someone whose health may be at risk. Some tutors have felt concerned about people's life expectancies, but it should be pointed out that with medical advancements life expectancies for most people with disabilities are generally close to or the same as averages for the rest of the population. However, if the learner is experiencing real health problems, learning may be affected or interrupted.

Medication can also affect learning. It may be necessary to ask a learner what medication they are taking, and to find out if they experience any side effects such as tiredness or discomfort.

g. Meeting together

Most tutors find that their partners rarely miss a meeting or are late. However, some tutors have had problems with this. One tutor found that her partner was often late for sessions until they both decided that learning how to tell time had to be a priority. In this way, a frustration was turned into a concrete goal which they soon achieved. The problem of meeting together was integrated into literacy work. Similarly, when St. Christopher House Literacy Program moved to its new location, tutors and learners studied maps and bus routes together to prepare for the change. Thanks to this preparation, the transition was easily managed by most learners.

h. Ending the partnership

Ending a partnership is not easy. It can be done very well or very badly. In some cases learners have been left feeling confused and hurt. One learner says:

> I used to have a tutor but she got too busy and had to leave me. I was very mad. I don't know what happened.

Tutors may also experience anxiety when ending a partnership. One tutor who became quite frustrated in her partnership says:

> I didn't call the learner. I backed out. I failed.
> I would have had to lie to the learner.
> I had no reason to quit, but I wanted to quit.

Communication does not have to break down in this way. For example, when Pat told Joan and Carol that she had to end their partnerships, they spent time talking about what this meant. Pat's car had been stolen and Carol said to Pat: "Your car was stolen and now my tutor is stolen." Then they wrote this Language Experience Story giving expression to their feelings:

Bad Luck for Carol

They took my work from Pat's car.
Pat's car was stolen.
My work is gone. Joan's work is gone.
Pat's keys are gone.
At St. Christopher House, there is no new 1989 calendar for us to use.
Pat is upset. Joan is upset.
Carol is upset.
We did a good job and good work when I came here.

Luckily, Joan and Carol had become very involved with the Literacy Program, participating in social events and publishing stories in Literacy Link. They knew other tutors, learners and staff who worked at the House on the same night as they did. The fact that they were both comfortable and involved with the Program made the transition to another tutor much easier. Feeling connected goes a long way!

Most of the challenges listed above are familiar to all tutors, not just those who work with learners who have a disability.

Joan and Sherry review a draft of the handbook.

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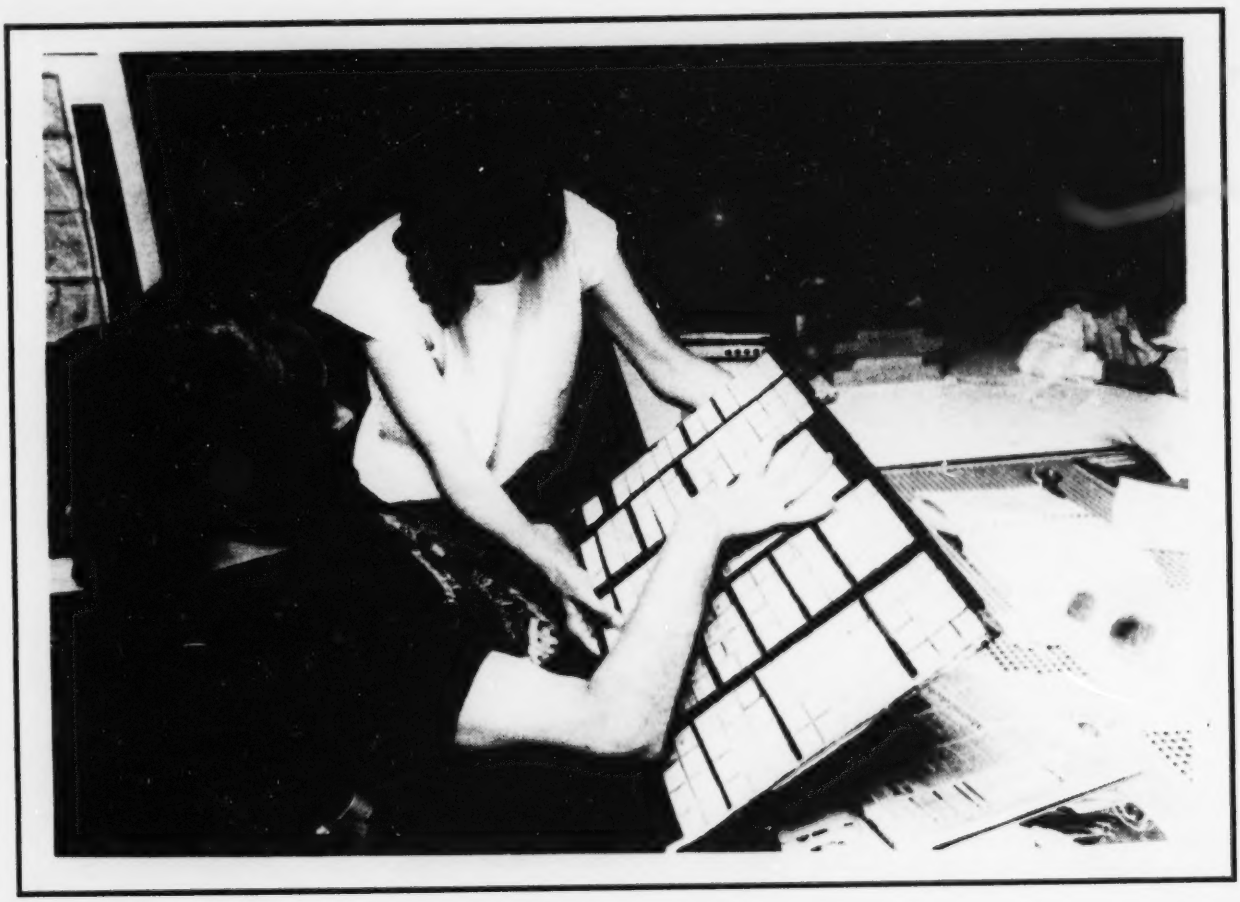

Aaron and Karen discuss a story.

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Julie and Carol work with flashcards.

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Eleanor works at the new computer table.

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Don and Jane work at the old computer table.

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Isaura , a learner, reminds us that,
"learners must feel physically comfortable."

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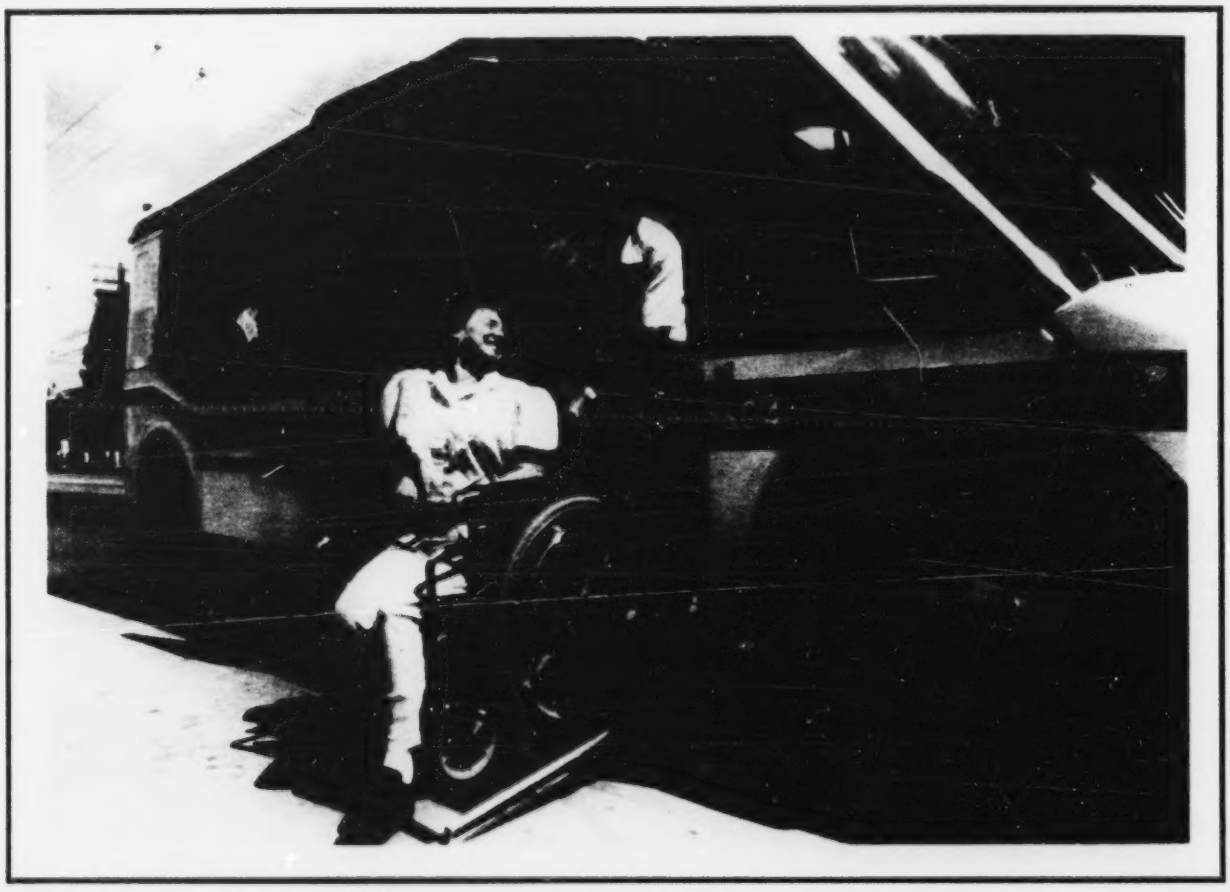

Eleanor arrives by Wheel-Trans to meet her literacy partner.

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Don and Jane enjoy their partnership.

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Section C:

The Morning Group

Part C-1 : Who are the Learners?

Besides one-to-one tutoring, many adults enjoy working in small groups. The Literacy Program has two small groups. One of them is called "The Morning Group". The next section of this handbook is about the experiences of this group.

The Morning Group began in March 1989 when the Toronto Board of Education asked St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program to co-sponsor a class for learners who have a disability. At the time many people who use wheelchairs were looking for a literacy class but were finding that the Board classes were not accessible. St. Christopher House would be accessible to these people.

At the present time there are four learners in the group. Aaron, Lois and Randi have been with the group since the beginning, and Chester has joined more recently. All four use Wheel-Trans, and Chester, Aaron and Randi do not use speech to communicate.

The learners come from different parts of the city, one from down the street, another from East York, and two from North York. The fact that they have to come so far for a literacy class shows how few accessible adult classes there are.

Each learner is unique in terms of their interests, needs, and abilities. A lot of individual attention is possible because there are two teachers and one trained volunteer for each of the three mornings that The Morning Group meets. The group never looks like a traditional classroom with the teacher standing at the front of the room. The Morning Group looks more like a group of tutors and learners working together, one-to-one in a group context.

Part C-2: Development of the Morning Group

The Morning Group has come a long way. The expertise which Anne and Karen, the teachers of The Morning Group, now have has developed gradually, along with many other changes and thanks to a lot of hard work.

The kitchen

When The Morning Group began, their work space was an old kitchen on the second floor of a church. Learners accessed the kitchen by using an elevator. It was not possible, however, for them to get to the Literacy Program and resource centre which were on the floor above the kitchen. This meant that The Morning Group learners could not do many of the things which other learners enjoy, such as visiting a staff person, or choosing books from the resource centre. There was a certain amount of isolation.

Another problem was that the street was not visible from the classroom or easy to reach. It was impossible to know if Wheel-Trans had arrived or not, so teachers or volunteers would often have to run out and check for it. This was especially a problem during the first eight-week period when Wheel-Trans rides could not be pre-booked at regular times. A lot of class time was lost worrying about Wheel-Trans.

Putting learners who have a disability in the kitchen of a church also has other subtle problems. We have already seen how people with disabilities are often underestimated or pitied. The stereotypes are strong. The image of people with disabilities in a church kitchen brings to mind a 'crafts in the kitchen' charity scene. This would hardly help the learners be seen as hard-working adults who were part of the literacy program.

So, even though the other literacy small group also had to use the kitchen for a work space, it was particularly negative for The Morning Group, for both practical and social reasons.

Learner support

When The Morning Group began there was only one teacher. However, it soon became clear that more resources were needed. A second teacher was hired, and volunteers were recruited. Several volunteers came as far as the front door and left, clearly uncomfortable with working with a group of people who have physical disabilities. It was only after Tutor Training sessions addressed awareness of disabilities that committed volunteers were found (see Part B-1: Training Tutors).

The amount of learner support needed by The Morning Group has been considerable. Teachers and literacy staff have put a lot of effort into helping learners work out problems concerning work, Wheel-Trans, computers, home, and so on. This can be quite complex when many service agencies are involved in a learner's life. For example, the teachers have become involved in helping one learner leave a sheltered workshop and begin training for a real job. The teachers have taken on an advocate role, and have had to speak with service providers connected with the workshop and with the training program that the learner is trying to access.

There have also been long hours spent waiting with a learner for a late Wheel-Trans, and dealing with a crisis such as when one learner was taken to the wrong home.

The move

It was a big step forward when St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program moved to its new location at Dundas and Ossington. The Morning Group (and other learners and tutors) now have a good work space, and easy access to the resource centre and to staff offices. Learners can now get out to meet Wheel-Trans in just a minute or two, and many can do this independently. **For the first time the learners in The Morning Group feel truly a part of the Literacy Program. It has made a big difference.**

Communication

Communication is an important aspect of The Morning Group. Because three of the learners do not rely on speech to make themselves understood, they need other techniques and aids for communication. These three learners all use **Blissymbolics** to communicate. This is introduced below.

Part C-3 : Augmentative Communication

We all communicate in many different ways besides speech, such as using gestures, facial expressions and writing. Sometimes we say it better without words! In a noisy environment like a construction site, it may be difficult to talk so we resort to writing notes or using gestures to communicate. When we use other methods besides speech to communicate, we are using augmentative communication.

For a person who has a speech impairment, augmentative communication techniques are very important. One learner who has a speech impairment makes herself understood by using her 'homemade' gestures. She is very expressive so people learn to understand her quickly.

For some people who have a speech impairment, typical gestures and facial expressions are not enough to communicate effectively. Something more comprehensive is needed. This is where special augmentative communication techniques and aids come in. Deaf people, for example, use a system of signing to communicate called **American Sign Language** (ASL). ASL is comprehensive. It is a language in its own right.

For a person who has a speech impairment and who has little hand and arm control, signing or gesturing may not be possible. In this case, a special communication system is used. Blissymbolics is one example of such a communication system.

Part C-4 : The Basics of Blissymbolics

Blissymbolics is a language made up of graphic visual symbols. These symbols are displayed on a board or book which is carried by the person. Sometimes the Blissymbolics board is mounted onto a wheelchair.

To communicate with Blissymbols the person points with his hand or a headstick (a pointer worn on the head), to the different symbols. It is fairly easy for others to understand Blissymbolics because the meanings of the symbols are written below them.

Blissymbolics is a graphic, meaning-based communication system. It is less abstract than orthography (writing) in which symbols (letters) represent sounds.

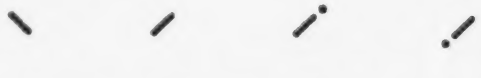
Some Blissymbols are pictographs. They look like the things they represent:

house man woman person face

Some symbols are ideographs. They represent ideas:

before after protection happy

Still others are arbitrary:



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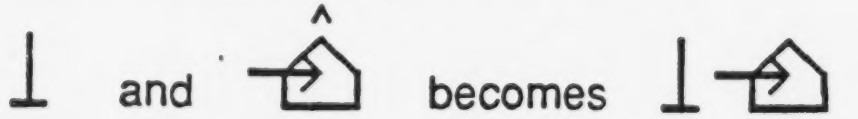
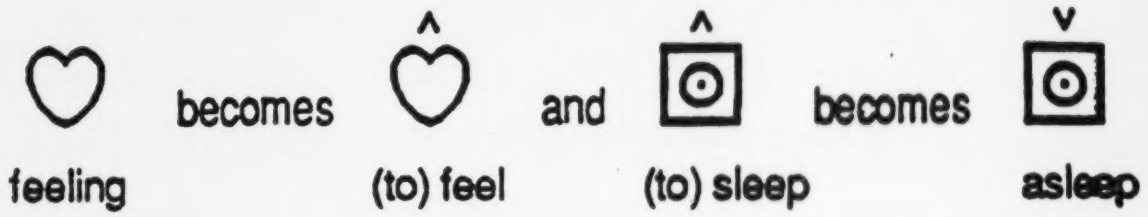
Symbols can be combined to create new expressions:



person and visit becomes visitor

The use of indicators can subtly change meanings. For example:



Strategy symbols can be used to expand vocabulary. The example below shows the strategy symbol for "opposite meaning":

(Blissymbols reprinted with permission of Blissymbolics Communication International.)

Part C-5:
Communicating with a Person using Blissymbolics

Communicating with a person using Blissymbolics takes more time than talking. As the person points to symbols, the listener reads them aloud. This is a way of giving feedback, of reading back to the person what he is saying. This way you both know if the message is being understood.

It is important to ask for clarification when you need it. Just say, "Do you mean ____?" or "Sorry, I don't get that" or "Can you repeat that?"

Once you have a relationship with the person, communication becomes easier. When Aaron points to the letter "h" friends know that he is probably saying "How are you?" To quicken the conversation, the other person usually just says, "How am I? Oh I'm fine. How are you?" There is though, a fine line to be aware of. If we predict everything a person is saying we never let them actually say anything.

* * * *

At Tutor Training, volunteers often try communicating with each other using Blissymbols. Usually volunteers have problems expressing themselves. As one volunteer says:

> I was trying to say "learn more" but my partner thought I meant "discover" which is a little different. It is frustrating because you don't know whether to try to clarify, or just move on to the next word.

Most people who communicate with Blissymbols are far more adept at it than volunteers are, but the slowness and the limitations are real.

Remember, communicating with Blissymbols takes time.

Part C-6 : Blissymbolics and Literacy

The transition from Blissymbolics to traditional orthography (writing) is different for each person. One strength which many people who use Blissymbolics have is an understanding of the concept of reading. A person who uses Blissymbolics already reads symbols to communicate.

A person who uses Blissymbolics may also be very clever at playing with language. For example, to explain that he had seen the movie My Left Foot, Aaron said, "opposite meaning of right, singular of feet."

The transition from Blissymbolics to orthography can be very gradual. Blissymbols can be used to reinforce words, and words can gradually be substituted for Blissymbols. Because Blissymbols have the words written below them, the Blissymbolics board can be a useful learning tool. Chester, a learner who has his Blissymbolics board mounted on his wheelchair, says that he often studies words on his way home in the Wheel-Trans.

As a person gains literacy skills, they may still prefer to use Blissymbolics for most communication. Anne and Karen stress the importance of respecting a learner's choices about how they will communicate. Blissymbolics should not be devalued, since it is a valid way of communicating for many literacy learners.

Part C-7: Communication Experiences

Listening to learners' stories, you realize that peoples' ways of communicating constantly change and evolve. It is important to be aware of where a person is coming from, and where a person is going. All of this affects literacy. For example, Randi explains:

> I learn board 7.
> Before 7 I talked. Teacher, mum understand.
> I like words. I like talk. I like computers.
> I want work computer. I want more read. Help work.

What is complex for Randi is that different people in his life expect him to communicate in different ways. Anne and Karen, the teachers of The Morning Group, have spent much time with Randi working out a communication strategy that he is comfortable with.

Communication issues can be very sensitive. The way you communicate is closely tied with your sense of yourself. Lois, for example, felt that she should never repeat herself if a person did not understand her. This is because when she was young her mother told her that this was rude. Anne, Karen and Lois discussed this issue to help Lois feel more confident and secure about her communication.

Before learning Blissymbolics, both Aaron and Chester communicated only with their eyes (basically answering yes or no). Aaron reminds us that changes do not happen over night:

> At 13 I learned Bliss. At first I did not like it.
> At 16 I saw the light.

Chester talks about how it felt during the seven years that he communicated with his eyes and head:

> It felt frustrating. I was thinking more things than
> I was saying. Sometimes people thought I was crazy.

Now Chester has over 500 Bliss symbols and he is extremely competent at communicating. His way of communicating, however, is changing again as he learns new literacy skills:

> In the future I hope to use the Epson
> (a portable computer with a voice pack) for everything.

Part C-8: The Role of Technology

Uses of Computers

Computers have had a strong impact on The Morning Group. When the group began they did not have a single computer. Now each learner in The Morning Group uses one to some extent.

For Randi, working on the computer is something he can do independently. He has become competent on the computer very quickly and because holding a pencil is difficult for him, the computer now opens up many possibilities for literacy.

Lois has recently begun using the computer, usually to type a letter or story. She also prepares final copies of group projects.

Both Chester and Aaron use their portable computers for communication. Chester enjoys the fact that with his computer he can communicate independently. There is no need for an assistant. Because the computer actually has a voice, Chester can command attention in a way that he never could before.

Aaron finds communicating with his computer slower than Blissymbols so he tends not to use it for conversation. However, it does have the potential to be useful for many daily activities. When Aaron shops, for example, he can print out his shopping list before he gets to the store. Literacy skills are the key to being able to do this.

Accessing computers

Learners can usually access a computer through a service agency which provides both funding and training. The training is very important since a computer is of no help if the learner is not trained to use it. Funding and training are more difficult to access for adults. For example, because Aaron is not directly affiliated with a service agency, he was unable to access free training for his computer.

Limitations of computers

Technology break-downs are a fact of life for The Morning Group. For example, Aaron's computer, or the switch which he uses to operate it, has been broken for about 75% of class time. The system is complicated, and once one part is broken, the entire system is affected. However, literacy work continues despite these setbacks. Anne and Karen both stress the importance of having back-ups ready for when computers are not working.

Low technology aids

While computers represent high technology aids for literacy, there are also many simple, low technology aids which are also useful. For example, book stands, magnifying glasses, and pencil grips are all simple aids which can greatly enable a learner to read and write independently and comfortably.

Part C-9: Adapting Literacy Techniques

Anne and Karen, the teachers of The Morning Group, always begin with one question, **"How can we adapt this exercise so that the learner can do it?"** Here are some of their creative ideas.

a. The language experience approach

This technique is easily adapted to a person who communicates with Blissymbols. A tutor or assistant transcribes what the learner communicates. In writing a Language Experience story, learners who use Blissymbols can gain confidence and skill in expressing themselves. Communication and writing are integrated.

It is important to reread material with the learner. To facilitate this, stories can be transcribed in writing, or by using writing and key Blissymbols. Transcribing Blissymbolics raises difficult questions. Should translation be literal, or should minor changes be made so the syntax is more like English? For example, with Blissymbols Aaron literally says "I did go" rather than "I went." In this case, teachers feel comfortable writing "I went" because they know that Aaron understands and can read the words "I went." However, there is no formula to transcribe Blissymbolics. For each person, the solution will be different. (See "Jane and Don" in Part B-4 for a different kind of Language Experience story.)

The Language Experience Approach is very useful for group work since each learner can contribute one or two lines to a story. Group Language Experience stories served as a way to bring The Morning Group together.

b. Individual journal writing

Everyone in The Morning Group writes a journal, but for each person the process is very different.

Chester communicates his journal entries with Blissymbols and a volunteer or teacher transcribes it into his appointment book. Now that he has a computer, Chester can actually do the writing himself. For Chester, the computer is a tool for writing.

Aaron also uses his portable computer to write and print out his journal. When he first began literacy, he dictated his journal using Blissymbols.

Lois writes her journal herself, but she has reservations about journals. As she says:

> I don't like the journal because it's hard to think
> of what to write and to put it down.

For Lois, encouragement makes all the difference. But Anne and Karen are aware of, and sensitive to, Lois' strong regard for "the old school." As Lois says:

> In the old way we had the teacher at the board and we had to write down what she did. The new way is hard on me. It's hard to make a change to how you've been brought up.

Anne and Karen try to find a balance between challenging Lois and making sure that she feels comfortable.

When Randi writes his journal, a volunteer helps him articulate his ideas. For example, for one of his first journal entries Randi pointed to the Blissymbols "wheelchair" and "mum." The volunteer asked Randi, "What does your mum want? Do you also want a new wheelchair?" Together, using Blissymbols and talking, they worked out this sentence for Randi's journal, "Mum and I want new wheelchair."

The volunteer wrote this sentence in large clear letters in Randi's journal. Randi often retypes his journal onto his computer, and then prints it. The computer also has large print, something which is very useful for Randi.

Usually journal writing is not corrected or changed in any way. The journal is in the writer's own words. With Randi the situation is slightly different because there is a need to help him articulate what he wants to say. Asking questions, clarifying, showing him Blissymbols, and offering suggestions are all very important for him. In another journal Randi wrote:

> I want a walker to help my legs. I will ask Frank at Variety Village for exercises for my legs.

What is exciting about this journal entry is that it was Lois' suggestion that Randi talk to Frank about exercises. This is an example of how learners gain support from each other. Personal support does not just come from teachers and volunteers.

c. Reading

A book stand is a simple, inexpensive aid which props a book up. Both Chester and Aaron read to themselves using a book stand. They look up when a page needs turning or if they have a question.

At first, the teachers asked Aaron to try and read aloud. But they realized that this was physically tiring for him, and not appropriate since speaking is not how he communicates. Now Aaron reads to himself, a way of reading which is both faster and more comfortable.

Anne and Karen have learned to work with Aaron in ways which involve the least physical effort for him. For example, when Aaron is answering comprehension questions, there is no point in his writing out long answers. This would be time-consuming, not challenging.

Anne and Karen ask Aaron comprehension questions in a way that he can answer with short answers. Here are some examples:

<u>Understanding what you read</u>

Write F in the blank if the statement gives a fact about the story. Write O if the statement expresses an opinion.

----- 1. Everyone should know how to ride a bicycle.

----- 2. The author is interested in bicycle safety.

----- 3. The author likes bicycle racing.

<u>Words to define</u>

Write the letter of the best meaning before each word.

----- 1. judge	a. a very long race
----- 2. marathon	b. a person who picks the winner

<u>Remembering details</u>

Write Y before each statement that is true according to the story. Write N before each statement that is not true.

----- 1. The most popular way of travelling in the world is by bicycle.

----- 2. In the United States most bicycle riders are people who are too old to drive cars.

----- 3. The first bicycle was invented about 50 years ago in France.

Aaron can answer all of these questions with one letter answers.

Fill-in-the-blank exercises can also be adapted for one letter answers:

1963, a pop group called the Kon-rads had a studio _____	a. rest b. test c. try

The learner can also be given the original text to refer to with the word whitened out, and a Blissymbol clue provided. Here is an example:

He chose a _____ name-

David Bowie

after the Wild West hero.

To make up Blissymbol clues you do not have to know Blissymbolics. Anne and Karen have a Blissymbolics dictionary which they use to find symbols.

d. **Rewriting newspaper articles**

Anne and Aaron read many sports articles together from the newspaper. Anne rewrites the articles in easy-to-read language and then she and Aaron decide on a few key words which Aaron wants to remember. Anne writes Blissymbols above these words, to help Aaron learn and remember them.

Ballard ill

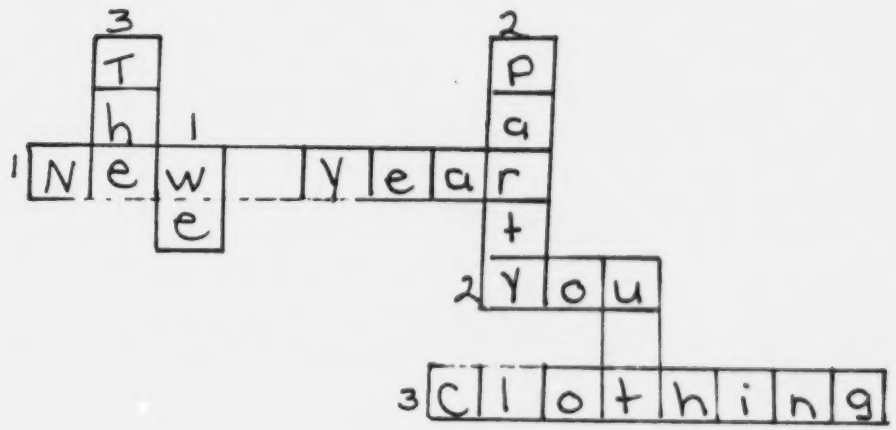
Harold Ballard is very ill.

He is in a Florida hospital.

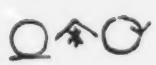
Yolanda Ballard, his companion said that he is feeling better.

e. **Crossword puzzles**

Crossword puzzles can also be adapted to Blissymbolics. In the example below, the clues are given in Blissymbols. The answers are chosen from the word list.



Across

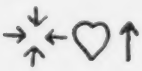
1 

2

3

Down

1

2 

3 /

Word List

party
we
the
you
New Year
clothing

Part C-10: Publishing Learners' Writing

Publishing learners' writing has been an important achievement of The Morning Group. The first publishing happened through group work, using the Language Experience Approach.

Group projects often begin quite spontaneously. For example, when Lois first began literacy she had a strong interest in maps and geography. She found pamphlets of High Park in Toronto and began working on drawing a map of the park. Eventually, the group decided to go to High Park together. They had an enjoyable day, and came back and wrote a story about it which was then published in Literacy Link. This was the first chance for other volunteers in literacy to learn about The Morning Group. The Morning Group now publishes regularly in Literacy Link. This means that other people are hearing about the group, and are also starting to learn more about disabilities. The Morning Group's review of the film "My Left Foot" for example, says a lot:

My Left Foot

Aaron thought the movie was O.K.
"There was nothing new or exciting,
as I know about C.P."

Randi thought it was sad
that it took 19 years
to get a wheelchair.

Lois thought it showed how some people
don't understand the problems with speech
that people with cerebral palsy have.

We think that more people
should see the movie
to become more aware.

Besides group efforts, individual learners in The Morning Group are also publishing their work. For example, Chester has written his life story and is now publishing it in serial form in Literacy Link. Here is an excerpt:

62

A Handicap Birth

When my mother had me, the doctor knew that I could be a handicap baby. My parents were afraid they would have a handicap person in their family.

I was in the Oshawa hospital. The doctor was afraid that I would die if I didn't go to the Toronto Hospital. My parents took me to a special doctor. He told them I was born handicapped.

At first they took the news poorly. They talked about it with each other. My mother and father decided to keep me with them.

They learned about a special school in Oshawa.

Writing and publishing his personal story gives Chester great satisfaction. Recently at St. Christopher House, literacy has also become political . . .

Part C-11: Gaining Power: The Wheel-Trans Meeting

The Wheel-Trans meeting was an important initiative of The Morning Group. It all began when Karen brought in an article about problems with the Wheel-Trans service. Everyone could relate to the article and it stimulated a lot of discussion. Then, someone had the idea to hold a meeting to discuss the problems.

The Morning Group organized an agenda, picked two people to co-chair the meeting, and decided who they should invite. Each person invited someone from another organization such as PUSH (Persons United for Self-Help) and ARCH (Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped). Other people from St. Christopher House also attended.

The meeting was very productive, and a group was formed to lobby for access to literacy programs. For the first time, The Morning Group established some links with disability groups.

The Morning Group also published a summary of their meeting in Literacy Link:

Wheel-Trans Meeting

We did have meeting about Wheel-Trans. Some of the problems that we have are:

1. Have to phone 4 days in advance to book Wheel-Trans.
2. We can only get a ride one way or not at all.
3. Takes a long time to get through on the phone lines.
4. The operators don't take time to listen to us.
5. Many ambulatory people are taking Wheel-Trans -- can they take Wheel-Trans cars or taxis instead?
6. We can't get Metropass.

We started writing letters and someone from Wheel-Trans is coming to speak to us. We need Wheel-Trans to go to school.

Through this work, learners are gaining entry into public life. They are networking with other groups, writing letters, and organizing future work. The learning is concrete, memorable, and important. Learners are using their literacy skills to make changes that are important to them.

Section D:

Conclusions

Part D-1: Comparing Two Models of Learning

One-to-one tutoring and the small group are two very different learning models. It is useful to compare them and understand what each one offers.

One-to-one tutoring is personal and individual. Many learners enjoy one-to-one work because the environment does not feel like a classroom. Other learners prefer the social aspect of a small group. There is the challenge of getting to know people and of working co-operatively with them.

It is interesting to hear about Mavis' experiences in The Morning Group. She did not stay because, as she says, "They are very nice people but I couldn't learn there. I couldn't hear what they said." Even though Mavis wears a hearing aid, sounds tend to be distorted and background noise amplified. Clearly, Mavis benefits from one-to-one work in a quiet environment. But her experiences with the group were not all negative. As Rosanna says:

> In The Morning Group Mavis had to give support to the other learners. It was a good experience because she had never been in that situation before. It was reaffirming and she enjoyed helping.

Lois has found a similar satisfaction in The Morning Group:

> In the small class I have learned how to work with other people. Karen and Anne asked me to help Randi to read. It was my first time to help somebody. They said thank-you after.

Both Mavis and Lois have benefitted from the interdependence that is part of a group. There is the opportunity to give and find support.

Through a group an individual can gain the confidence and support needed to take on large projects. It is highly unlikely, for example, that the Wheel-Trans meeting could have been organized by one individual. Because the learners in The Morning Group realized that they shared the same problems, they decided to work together to address them. To use an old saying, there is strength in numbers.

In spite of all the successes of The Morning Group, there is still a concern that it is a segregated group. Are learners' integration needs being met? See the next two sections on issues and future goals to find out more about this discussion.

Part D-2: Issues for Literacy Organizers

As St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program works to include and welcome learners who have a disability, issues arise. The issues listed below do not have any simple answers, but it is important at least to recognize and be aware of them. Other literacy groups are likely to face similar issues.

1. **Recognizing limitations**

> "We can't be everything to everyone."
> (a literacy organizer)

While the Literacy Program tries to welcome all learners who have a disability, there is a feeling that limitations must be recognized. For instance, the Literacy Program would not have the expertise to work with a learner who is deaf and communicates in American Sign Language (ASL). On the other hand, the Literacy Program could train an interpreter who knows ASL in literacy.

2. **Outreach**

> "Special outreach to group homes plants the seeds of segregation."
> (a literacy organizer)

How is outreach done? Should outreach specifically target people with disabilities? Clearly, there is a high need for literacy among this population. However, literacy staff hesitate to do 'special' outreach. There is already a waiting list of learners who have a disability, and new referrals come steadily from the Toronto Board of Education and elsewhere.

Learners who have a disability make up about 25% of the learners at St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program at the present time. Literacy organizers are comfortable with this ratio. Generally, the goal is to have the population of the program reflect the diversity of the community.

Literacy organizers do not want the Literacy Program to be the only option for learners who have a disability. Instead, other literacy programs should be encouraged to become accessible to learners who have a disability. Ideally, all learners should be able to do literacy in their own neighbourhoods.

3. **What is literacy?**

"I felt like we were doing a social activity, not literacy."
(a past tutor)

Is there a bottom line to define what literacy is, or what the basic expectation of a learner is? A communication base with the learner is definitely needed. What else? One literacy organizer describes the bottom line as the learner being motivated to learn. If a learner comes only because they have been referred by a social worker or teacher, the motivation will not be there. (This point also relates to the outreach issue. What if entire group homes are referred for literacy?)

On the other side of the coin, it is recognized that tutors in challenging partnerships need support so they will not feel isolated. The challenge for the partnership is to turn the social situation into a learning situation.

4. **Integration**

"The Morning Group is a segregated group in a community setting."
(a literacy organizer)

Integration has been a difficult issue for literacy organizers ever since the beginning of The Morning Group. No one wanted a group that might be seen as 'a disabled group.' St. Christopher House Literacy Program quickly established integration as a goal, and attempts were made to make this happen. However, the few non-disabled learners who joined the group had short stays, leaving either because they found day jobs, or because of health problems, or because they felt uncomfortable being grouped with learners who have a disability.

One literacy organizer makes the point that it is hard to integrate able-bodied learners into The Morning Group. Able-bodied learners do not necessarily feel comfortable joining the group. For example, one woman who is hard-of-hearing, but sees herself as non-disabled, was referred to the group and was clearly uncomfortable with being included with people who have a physical disability. She only went to one class.

Another barrier to attracting non-disabled learners to The Morning Group is the fact that the class is held during the day. Most learners coming to the Literacy Program during the day are those who have a disability and do not work.

One literacy organizer concludes that the Literacy Program is going about integration backwards. Instead of integrating able-bodied learners into The Morning Group, learners who have a disability should be integrated individually into regular classes.

Aaron, who has had negative experiences in both segregated and integrated classes, says that he recognizes that The Morning Group is segregated. When asked if this concerns him, Aaron says that he "did not think about it." Above all, Aaron appreciates the fact that the teachers see him "as a person" and that, "the class is small." Though he is satisfied with The Morning Group, Aaron feels that an evening class would be interesting.

Chester, who is moving on to an integrated college program, feels that integration is good because you can "make new friends who are not handicapped." He feels that for integration to be successful a person needs good communication and listening skills. A person should be given a good communication device and an aide if necessary.

Integration is not a simple issue. One measure of integration is to see if people are making friends. Here we see some progress. The volunteers in The Morning Group have become friends with the learners, often being involved with them outside of class. Literacy staff have gotten to know the learners much more. And learners from The Morning Group come more and more to social events such as the Christmas Party.

However, as these deliberations continue, the overall feeling is that integration needs of the learners in The Morning Group are not being fully met.

Part D-3: Goals for the Future

The other side of thinking about difficult issues is to plan future goals. Here is a glimpse at literacy organizers' future goals.

a. More tutors who have a disability

Effort should be made to make the tutoring program known to potential tutors who have a disability. They can be excellent mentors and role models for others. This would also break down the 'able-bodied tutor/ disabled learner' division. However, it should not be assumed that a tutor who has a disability should automatically work with a learner who has a disability.

b. Increase participant involvement

Literacy staff would like to increase all volunteer involvement in the program, including that of learners. Learners who have a disability have already been involved in some hiring and training, but new involvement, such as in the area of program evaluation, could be nurtured. Recently learners and teachers in The Morning Group have conducted training sessions on literacy and people who have a physical disability. Similar workshops are being planned for the future.

c. Support for learners to integrate

As literacy organizers and teachers reassess The Morning Group, there is a feeling that learners need to be given support to integrate -- when they feel ready -- into regular classes. Integration rarely happens by chance. There needs to be a position created for a support person who could help people integrate into regular classes at the Toronto Board of Education and elsewhere.

d. Provide leadership

The Literacy Program can provide leadership to other programs in the literacy community and within St. Christopher House, to help other programs include people who have a disability. More community and in-house awareness training could be offered, with learners playing an active educating role.

e. Network with disability groups

St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program can gain a lot of useful information by consulting and networking with disability groups. The Wheel-Trans meeting has laid some of the groundwork for this.

f. Lobby for integration, access, and human rights

It is important to support and work with other groups that are lobbying for the rights of people who have a disability. The issue of access to literacy is particularly important to St. Christopher House literacy organizers.

Section E:

Appendix

Part E-1: Handbook Participants

Aaron
Anna
Anne
Bill
Carol
Caroline
Chester
Dahlia
David
Diane
Don
Elaine
Erica
Gail
Isaura
Jane
Joan
Judy
Julie
Karen
Lois
Mavis
Nancy
Nancy
Pat
Randi
Ron
Rosanna
Sara
Sherry
Terri
Tracy
Wendy

Part E-2: Terms Related to Disability

These terms are included for additional information. Not all areas are covered in this handbook.

Accessibility

Accessibility is usually talked about in terms of making public buildings and transportation services available to people who use wheelchairs (wheelchair accessible). A commitment to make a literacy program accessible to people who have a disability requires a readiness to provide the necessary supports. These could include: attendant care, awareness training for volunteers, wheelchair ramps, accessible washrooms, large print computers and so on.

American Sign Language

American Sign Language (ASL) is a language in its own right. It is a visual language whose structure is not based on English. A literal translation of ASL into English could sound something like: "Me go store finish buy milk before." ASL is as rich and complex as English and is central to deaf culture. When a person who communicates with ASL learns English, it is like learning a second language.

Augmentative Communication

The term augmentative communication refers to all methods of communication other than speech. When we use gestures and facial expressions and writing to communicate, we are using augmentative communication. For people who cannot rely on speech to make themselves understood, these other ways of communicating are very important.

Blissymbolics

Blissymbolics is a communication system which people with little speech or arm and hand control can use to communicate effectively. Blissymbolics is made up of graphic visual symbols.

These symbols are displayed on a board or book which is carried by the person. Sometimes the Blissymbols board is mounted on the wheelchair.

To communicate a message the person points to the different symbols. It is not difficult for others to understand Blissymbolics because the meanings of the symbols are written below them.

Braille

Only a small percentage of registered blind people read braille. Most find reading this system of raised dots too difficult or too slow. The simplest form of braille, called Grade 1, consists of signs which represent each letter of the alphabet and punctuation. A tutor could quite easily work with a learner in Grade 1 braille. The tutor's role would not be to teach braille, but to use it to do literacy.

Cerebral Palsy

Cerebral Palsy is a disability which affects the motor or muscular system. A person with cerebral palsy may have difficulty with walking and with arm and hand control. How much difficulty the person has depends on whether the condition is mild or severe. Speech impairments are also quite common. Again, this may be very mild, or speech may be very affected. There may also be a hearing or visual impairment, epilepsy, or a developmental handicap.

Cerebral palsy is a very general term. Many people who have cerebral palsy say that they feel underestimated by the public. Cerebral palsy is usually caused by a lack of oxygen to the brain during the birth process.

Deaf

People who describe themselves as deaf usually identify with the Deaf Community. This community sees itself as having a common language, common experiences and values, and a common way of interacting. American Sign Language (ASL) is the langauge of the deaf community. A person may be hard-of-hearing but describe herself as deaf because culturally she feels a part of this community.

Unlike many other disability groups, the deaf community does not focus on the goal of integration. Its priority is to nurture its own culture.

Developmental Handicap

Definitions of developmental handicap are arbitrary and complex, and are constantly affected by the medical establishment and policy makers. In Canada the terms "developmental handicap", "mental handicap," and "intellectual impairment" have replaced the term "mentally retarded" which is felt to be offensive.

Most people labelled "developmentally handicapped" are considered mildly handicapped. Usually the handicap is due to something environmental such as abuse, neglect or lead poisoning. In the case of **Down's Syndrome**, however, the handicap is due to an extra chromosome.

People labelled "developmentally handicapped" are said to be slow learners. The positive way to think about this is to assume that the person can learn and go from there.

Epilepsy

A person who has epilepsy has seizures. Most people who have epilepsy can control their seizures with medication. There are many different kinds of seizures and they are unpredictable. A person who has epilepsy can usually describe to you what kind of assistance they may need (if any) if they have a seizure. People who have epilepsy report much discrimination in terms of employment.

Hard-of-Hearing

A person who is hard-of-hearing has some hearing. The person's speaking ability will vary depending on many factors including whether the hearing loss occurred before or after acquiring language.

It is important to ask a person who is hard-of-hearing how they prefer to communicate. People who are hard-of hearing usually use some combination of speech, gestures, finger-spelling, signs, and writing. Some people can read lips but only some speech is visible on the lips, so the method is not reliable.

Hearing Aid

Hearing aids help a person to hear by amplifying sound. Unfortunately, hearing aids also amplify unwanted sounds. A person wearing a hearing aid often hears a lot of distortion.

It is important for a person who uses a hearing aid to have access to a quiet work environment. When speaking to a person wearing a hearing aid, look directly at the person, and speak slowly and clearly, using gestures.

Hearing Impairment

The term "hearing impairment" is a medical label generally avoided by the deaf community.

Integration

The goal of integration is for people labelled "developmentally handicapped" and for those who have a physical disability to live as full citizens in their community. This means being included in regular schools and having real jobs in the community. One way to look at integration is to ask whether people who have a disability are participating with other people in the community.

Learning Disability

The term "learning disability" refers to difficulties in processing some kinds of information. People of average intelligence may have a very specific problem with reading, writing or organizing information because of a learning disability. **Dyslexia** is an example of a learning disability related to language. Literacy organizers find that many people who have difficulty learning are labelled "dyslexic". It appears to have become an over used catch-all term.

Multiple Sclerosis

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a disease which affects the central nervous system. A person with MS may have problems with walking, speech or eyesight. A difficult factor in MS is that the symptoms tend to come and go, while getting progressively worse.

Segregation

Segregation is the process of setting devalued people, including people labelled "developmentally handicapped" and those with a physical disability, apart from the rest of society. Historically, labelled

people have been grouped together and segregated in institutions, hospitals, sheltered workshops and special schools.

Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy is a process where people who are devalued (such as those with disabilities) come together to speak up for themselves collectively or to learn how to advocate on their own behalf. A leading self-advocacy group in Canada is **People First**, a group made up of people who are labelled "developmentally handicapped". People First members support each other in their efforts to speak up for themselves and make decisions about their lives. This self-advocacy movement often challenges parents and professionals who have traditionally made decisions about the lives of people labelled "developmentally handicapped".

Sheltered Workshops

Sheltered workshops are segregated work places where people typically do menial work for less than minimum wage. Originally service providers saw sheltered workshops as training grounds for people who have a disability. However, only a small minority of the workers in sheltered workshops move on to the real work force.

Speech Impairment

A person who has a speech impairment has some difficulty with speech. For example, a person may speak unclearly, very slowly, or with a stutter. With time, it usually becomes easier to understand someone who has a speech impairment.

The assumption is often made that a person with a speech impairment also has a developmental handicap. This is a misconception. The two are not related.

Supported Work

Supported work is a fairly new concept, and is an alternative to sheltered workshops. In a supported work program, a person is given support and training in order to find and keep a real job. A job coach usually provides on-the-job training to the new employee, and gives advice about any concerns that may arise.

TDD

Telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD's) enable deaf people to use the telephone. These devices are attached to the regular phone and print out messages onto a screen or paper.

Visual Impairment

Visual impairments can range from partial sight to blindness. Many partially sighted people have very specific visual problems such as not being able to see fine detail, or having tunnel vision. A learner who has a visual impairment can usually explain how their vision is limited. Depending on the nature of the impairment, literacy work may or may not be affected.

Many general good teaching practices are helpful to a learner who has a visual impairment. These include paying attention to lighting, using large print, and ensuring that there is good contrast (eg. a black felt tip pen on white paper). Low vision aids such as a magnifying glass, a ruler to guide the eye, or a piece of cardboard with a slot cut out of it to highlight one line at a time on a page (called a typoscope), can all prove helpful.

Part E-3: Resources

At the present time, two comprehensive resource lists focusing on literacy and disability are available. One is called **"Resources"** (1990) and has been compiled by Tracy Odell, the Access Coordinator at the Ministry of Education, Literacy Branch. This list is especially useful for its detailed guide to organizations in Ontario.

The second resource list is found in the Resource Book **"Lifeline to Literacy: People with Disabilities Speak Out."** The bibliography is especially useful.

Both of these resource lists are available from:

Ministry of Education
Literacy Branch
625 Church Street, 6th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M4Y 2E8

(416) 326-5495
(416) 326-5493 (TDD)

The following resources have been especially useful in developing this handbook, and are recommended reading:

Community-Based Literacy and Accessibility

Freedman, Jeffrey D. The Accessibility of Literacy Upgrading in the Community for Adults with Disabilities. Toronto: The Centre for Independent Living, 1988.

Gaber-Katz, Elaine, and Gladys Watson. "Community-Based Literacy Programming: The Toronto Experience." Adult Literacy Perspectives. Toronto: Culture Concepts Inc., 1989.

"Integrating Adults with Disabilities." Speaking Our Own Voice. Report of the Conference held in Toronto for Literacy Practitioners. Nov. 26, 1988. Toronto: Adult Basic Education Unit, 1988.

McBeth, Sally, and Vivian Stollmeyer. "East End Literacy: A Women's Discussion Group." Canadian Woman Studies/ les cahiers de la femme Fall/Winter 1988: 52-57.

McKnight, John. "Regenerating Community." in The Pursuit of Leisure: Enriching the lives of people who have a disability. Downsview: G. Allen Roeher Institute, 1989.

Odell, Tracy. Grindstone: Notes from the group on "Handicappism." Toronto: Ministry of Education, 1989.

---. "It's Time We Learned." Canadian Woman Studies/ les cahiers de la femme Fall/Winter 1988: 37-41.

T.V. Ontario. Lifeline to Literacy: People with Disabilities Speak Out. (Resource Book) Toronto: TVOntario, 1989.

The videos **"Lifeline to Literacy"** and **"Double Jeopardy"** are very useful training materials. They can be obtained through the Ministry of Education, Literacy Branch (see above).

Literacy and Disability

Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit. Viewpoints: A Series of Occasional Papers on Basic Education. Issue Number 2, Special Needs. England: ALBSU, 1985.

Carpenter, Tracy. The Right to Read: Tutor's Guide to the Frontier College S.C.I.L. Program. Toronto: Frontier College Press, 1986.

The Scottish Community Education Council. In Perspective: A Handbook for Adult Basic Education Tutors Working with Visually Impaired Learners. Edinburgh: SEC, 1988.

---. Moving Ahead: A New Handbook for Tutors Helping Mentally Handicapped Adults to Learn. Edinburgh: SEC, 1988.

A good starting point for finding materials on literacy and disability is the **Adult Basic Education Resource Centre at The Bickford Centre**. The address is:

The Bickford Centre
777 Bloor St. West (at Christie)
Toronto, Ontario
M6G 1L6

(416) 393-1995.

Disability

Herdin, Terence et al. Issues and Insights: A Handicapped Awareness Manual. B.C.: Ministry of Education, Continuing Education Division, 1982.

National Institute on Mental Retardation. Orientation Manual on Mental Retardation. Downsview: NIMR, 1981.

The National Institute on Mental Retardation is now called **The G. Allan Roeher Institute**. The Institute has the largest collection on mental handicap in North America and is located at York University:

G. Allan Roeher Institute
Kinsmen Building, York University
4700 Keele St.
Downsview, Ontario
M3J 2R6

(416) 661-9611

The Canadian Association for Community Living (an advocacy organization for people labelled developmentally handicapped) is also located here, as well as the **National People First Project.**

Films and videos are available from the Institute, including the video **"We Can Do It - The Story of People First"**.

Augmentative Communication / Blissymbolics

Blackstone, Sarah, ed. Augmentative Communication: An Introduction. Maryland: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 1986.

Fairley, Cathy et al. Reading: From Blissymbols to Traditional Orthography. Toronto: Easter Seal Communication Institute, 1987.

McNaughton, Shirley. "Blissymbols and Literacy." Communicating Together. September 1989: 12-13.

Resources on Augmentative Communication are available from:

Blissymbolics Communication International
250 Ferrand Drive, Suite 200
Don Mills, Ontario
M3C 3P2

(416) 421-8377

A short video called **"Speaking for Ourselves"** is available, and is an excellent orientation to communicating with people who use augmentative communication.

Participatory Research

Freire, P. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Continuum, 1988.

Maguire, P. Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach. Amhurst: Centre for International Education, 1987.

For more information
or to order copies
write to:

Adult Literacy Program
St. Christopher House
248 Ossington Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M6J 3A2

(416) 539-9000